

Canadian Blonde d'Aquitaine Association

116, 2116 - 27 Ave., NE, Calgary, Alberta T2E 7A6 ... Phone: 403 276 5771 ... E-Mail cbda@airenet.com

BREEDER PROFILE

The Canadian Blonde d'Aquitaine Association is pleased to offer this space to profile our breeder members. If your operation has been featured in a magazine or newspaper, please contact Myrna Flesch at westwind@telusplanet.net

WESTLANE FARMS

Four Generations!

Written by Myrna Flesch

Westlane Farms is located west of Didsbury, a town 45 minutes north of Calgary and an hour southwest of Red Deer. The farm is nestled in the foothills, and as you drive toward the buildings, down their lane which is bordered by pine trees, you can see the hills and mountains to the west. Perhaps, that is how they came to name the property Westlane Farms.

The farm has been in the family for three generations. Stan Konschuh was born and raised on the farm next door. The current location went from his grandfather, to his uncle, to his dad and then to Stan. Sarah came on the scene as an exchange student from the Yorkshire area of England, and stayed to marry this Central Alberta farmer. Sarah and Stan have lived and farmed on this farm for their entire married life. (Sarah did not reveal if this is a long time!) They raised three sons - Ryan, Grant and Mark.

The farm consists of approximately 600 acres of hay land and 500 acres of land seeded to barley, oats and canola. They run approximately 150 cows of which 80% are purebred Blondes. The remainder of the cows are Charolais/ Simmental cross with a few Angus - but they always use Blonde bulls on their commercial herd. The family has also raised 1800 pigs a year for the last ten years!

When the boys were younger, you could always find Westlane Farms on the show circuit in Alberta - Calgary Stampede, Olds Fair and Farm Fair in Edmonton in the fall. They were always rewarded for their show efforts and one year made almost a complete sweep at the Calgary Stampede. They have many championship banners adorning their farm office walls. Sarah is quick to acknowledge that the boys worked hard for the family to achieve their success in the show ring.

The writer met the Konschuhs when we were all showing cattle at the Calgary Stampede and Ryan was at that time twelve years old. Ryan is now married and he and wife Shannon are farming with his parents making this farm a 4th generation farm.

However, back to the beginning - Sarah and Stan have always taken a pragmatic approach to their farming operation - for several years putting up timothy hay for the Japanese Market - an operation in itself requiring careful management of the hay crop, curing to rigid standards, stacking and covering to ensure that the quality of the product was maintained.

Their first purebred Blondes were purchased from Van Alta Blondes and Markwood Blondes and from that beginning they have developed their purebred herd to its current size. Their pedigrees include Triple C Blondes, Blon Dell, Hanover, MBRHEO Blondes, Willow Springs Stock Farm, Kay Lee Farms, Paulgaard Cattle Co., Willow Lane Farms, Amber Blondes and West Wind Blondes.

In the mid 90s they developed a niche market in their area, utilizing a local abattoir and selling Blonde beef by the side or quarter, or for that matter, by specific cuts. In those days, Stan often had some very good sausage and an ever present jackknife to share a bit of it!

For several years they have run a "Home Bull Test" numbering about 20 bulls, developing a clientele that continues to grow. They also ventured into the embryo business - selling into Sweden and the United States. They just sold the last of the embryos this fall.

Sarah found time in the mid 90s to volunteer on the various Blonde Boards - serving as President in Alberta and as a Director of the Canadian Blonde Association for three years. Sarah mentioned that she takes her hat off to those who serve on boards trying to achieve the best for their members because in her words, "they do not always get the gratitude they deserve!"

Westlane Farms was one of the first Blonde Breeders to establish a farm website. They have found it certainly helped promote their cattle whether it be heifers or bulls. When she served on the Boards, she tried to encourage other breeders to get on board with the website idea but that was not an easy sell.

For the past two years, Westlane have finished their calves and shipped them to Laura's Lean Beef in Kentucky. They have been pleased with the results - averaging 67% cutability. A bonus is paid depending on how well the animals dress.

Sarah joined the work force as a realtor nine years ago and sells real estate full time now. Stan continues to devote time to the Blonde cattle operation and enjoys it when another breeder stops in to discuss cattle and have a "farmer look" at the herd.